

II) IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method of operating a notification and response system comprising the steps of:
 - a. assigning a unique contact address to each of a multiplicity of persons in a region;
 - b. enabling any of the multiplicity of persons to become a user of the notification and response system by being registered with the notification and response system;
 - c. generating a profile associated with ~~for~~ each user, the profile comprising parameters for the associated ~~that~~ user that indicate at least one group to which the associated user belongs;
 - d. generating a message for broadcast transmission to a group of users, said message having associated therewith a set of rules indicating which of the users that are intended to receive said message based on user parameters;
 - e. broadcasting, utilizing the unique contact address of each user in the group, the message to a group of users based on the parameters of each user that correlate to a rule associated with the message being transmitted;
wherein the unique contact address is used to access a user profile, the user profile indicating a plurality of alternative contact modes for an associated user, and wherein at least one of the alternative contact modes is utilized to transmit the message to the associated user;
wherein the user profile indicates when different alternative contact modes may be used at different times or days.
2. Cancelled.
3. Cancelled
4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the unique contact address is correlated to the user's social security number.

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the unique contact address of each user is a telephone number.
6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the unique contact address of each user is an email address.
7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the unique contact address of each user is an instant message address.
8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein groups of users are defined by geographic parameters in the users' profiles.
9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein groups of users are defined by biometric parameters in the users' profiles.
10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein groups of users are defined by security access parameters in the users' profiles.
11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein groups of users are defined by occupational parameters in the users' profiles.
12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein groups of users are defined by demographic parameters in the users' profiles.
13. Canceled.
14. Canceled.
15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein hierarchies of groups are defined and wherein users may belong to more than one group.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of modifying parameters in a user profile by an authorized user of the system.
17. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of enabling any of the multiplicity of persons to become a user of the notification and response system by registering with the notification and response system comprises:
 - i. providing registration procedure information to each of the persons;
 - ii. accepting payment of a registration fee from any of the persons desiring to register with the notification and response system; and
 - iii. indicating in a database associated with the notification and response ~~emergency~~ system that a person who has paid the registration fee is a registered user of the notification and response system.
18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
 - f. a user that receives the message transmits a confirmation message to the notification and response system.
19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of:
 - g. modifying the user's profile based on parameters of the confirmation message received from the user.
20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of:
 - g. modifying the content of subsequent messages transmitted to other users based on parameters of the confirmation message received from the user.
21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of

g. after failing to receive a confirmation message from a user after a predetermined time period has elapsed since the message was transmitted to that user, then attempting transmission of the message to that user via an alternative contact mode as set forth in that user's profile.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of
g. after failing to receive a confirmation message from a user after a predetermined time period has elapsed since the message was transmitted to that user, then modifying the content of subsequent messages transmitted to other users.
23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of
g. confirming the identity of the user that sends a confirmation message to the notification and response system.
24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the step of confirming the identity of the user that sends a confirmation message to the notification and response system is executed by checking the validity of a PIN received with the confirmation message.
25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the step of confirming the identity of the user that sends a confirmation message to the notification and response system is executed by checking biometric data received with the confirmation message.